



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies 5061

**Unit RS03 An introduction to the New
Testament**

Report on the Examination

2007 examination – January series

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RS03 An introduction to the New Testament

General comments

It is essential that centres consult the specification in order to adequately prepare candidates for this examination. The specification clearly identifies the Parable of the Great Feast as a passage for study, yet there were a significant number of candidates who were unable to answer the compulsory question as they seemed unfamiliar with this parable. There were further basic confusions; for example, in Question 2 the miracle of Legion was confused with other miracle accounts; in Question 3 the crucifixion and death were confused with the resurrection account. This suggested that some candidates had not been adequately prepared. Having the text in front of them did not seem to help some candidates. Centres need to teach how to use the Bible in this examination, so that it is a helpful resource rather than a distraction. It was also noticeable that significant number of candidates broke the rubric. These candidates often attempted parts across all three questions, possibly suggesting that they thought parts of different questions could be added to make a whole.

In contrast, there were some very good scripts that showed a mature understanding of the material. There were also some good evaluative answers that showed an ability to integrate arguments rather than just list points.

Handwriting was sometimes difficult to read and, again, candidates should be aware that illegible material cannot be credited.

Question 1

A surprising number of candidates either did not know the parable at all and did not attempt the question, or answered in terms of the Feeding of the 5000 or the Last Supper. Less able candidates tended to recount the parable or write at length about the general background to the parables. The importance of identifying the particular focus of the question cannot be emphasised enough. Part (a) required the evidence to support the view that the parable was written for Jews. Level 5 answers explained how the evidence given did support that view. Some candidates, through conciseness of writing, were able to give both depth and breadth in their answer. Less able candidates listed the evidence without any explanation, leaving it to the examiner to work out what the evidence showed. It should be noted that no marks can be awarded for information that has already been given in the stimulus passage, for instance saying that Matthew wrote the parable for Jews as it has references to the Jewish Scriptures. It is necessary to identify the Jewish Scriptures in the parable.

Part (b) elicited some good answers, drawing out from the parable the teaching about the Kingdom of God. It was clear that some centres had taught this parable in the light of the themes listed in the specification. As a result there were some excellent answers that were totally focussed, with each paragraph addressing some aspect of teaching on the Kingdom, and with textual support from the parable.

In contrast, some candidates were unable to give much teaching from the Parable of the Great Feast and so widened their answers to include other parables. However, only those features related to the Parable of the Great Feast could be credited. Those candidates who had discussed the Last Supper in part (a) then went on to discuss its meaning, which meant that they gained no marks in Question 1.

Question 2

As was noted in the general comments, candidates still need help with learning how to make appropriate use of the Bible in the examination. For some candidates, having the Bible in the examination leads to false security as they merely write out the text in full or paraphrase it, thinking that this is sufficient for an explanation of a passage or theme. Assessment Objective 1 is about knowledge and understanding. Understanding is demonstrated by selection and explanation, not narrative alone.

In part (a) the focus is clearly identified in the question as ‘the person of Jesus’. Some confused ‘person’ with work or purpose. Some ignored the focus altogether and wrote general comments about the miracle. In questions that ask for examination of some aspect of a text, it is expected that allusions to the text will be made to show where those features are to be found in the text. If candidates merely list the features without any reference to the text then a maximum Level 4 (10 marks) is usually applied.

It was interesting to note that a number of candidates concentrated on the differences between the different gospel accounts of the healing of the Centurion’s Slave. Clearly this answer had been prepared and was triggered by the name of the miracle in the question, though it had little to do with the focus asked for in the question.

Part (b) focussed on the work of Jesus, but many candidates misread this as ‘person’ or missed the fact that a different miracle (the miracle of Legion) had been cited. The skill required in AO2 is that of assessing the claim. Answers were often very one-sided, limiting the levels that could be awarded.

Question 3

Again, the focus in part (a) was specifically directed towards a set text: Luke’s account of Jesus’ crucifixion and death. However, some candidates ignored the text and listed general features of Luke’s Gospel, whilst others confused the crucifixion and death account with the resurrection narrative. The two narratives are clearly differentiated in the specification. In contrast, many candidates produced very good answers and clearly illustrated the features from the text.

Answers to part (b)(i) again revealed that candidates are studying outside the scope of the specifications, as many discussed the arrest and trial of Jesus. Others repeated the errors of part (a) and discussed the resurrection as part of the crucifixion and death narrative.

The evaluation seemed to be an area that many candidates were well prepared for, and there was some very good discussion. It should be noted that at AS level, the evaluation skill needs to demonstrate a reasoning process. This involves an assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the arguments. Listing arguments for both sides without any reflection will gain a maximum of Level 3.